THE RAILWAY QUESTION.

The general depression of railway property lately induced a large body of shareholders at Liverpool to memorialise the directors of the London and North-Western and the Midland lines, with suggestions for a restoration of confidence, by a change of management, including a new practical directory itself, appointed by the proprietors in place of by the general board of directors, whom it is proposed to reduce in numbers, the alteration to be brought about by the annual retirement of one third of the present members. New regulations in the meantime were also advised.——A "Traveller in many Lands" has come lately to the "Railway Rescue," as he titles it, in a publication by Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, in which he deprecates the attempts that are being made to increase dividends by additional fares and decreased accommodation of trains, with other absurd changes in past regulations. And it is not directors alone that are so blind to their own best interests, for even amongst the suggestions of the Liverpool shareholders just referred to, we find it recommended "that the rates of fare and tolls of all kinds *not productive* of a fair remuneration to the shareholders for their outlay and risk *be raised* at once, and where Parliament has limited the powers of raising such rates and tolls, that application be made next session to enable the directors to *raise them to a remunerative scale*." Do directors and shareholders imagine that wherever fares and tolls are not *productive* or remunerative, all they have to do is to raise them? Can they not conceive the possibility of raising them to a ruinous, or of *lowering* them to a remunerative scale? Let them only consult the Parliamentary records of shareholders and directorship in gas, and they will find that a lowering of charge and a raising of dividend have ever been inseparably consequent, but never a raising of charge and a raising of dividend. And the traffic by rail is at least as expansible as the consumpt of gas by tempting reductions of charge; while, on the other hand, as the author just alluded to remarks, "it is dangerous to practice on public patience and tempt new modes of transit," by increase of fares and decrease of trains; for "people will travel as much as possible at their own convenience and as cheaply as possible, so that the consequent result would probably be an increase of horse transit." He thinks the railway interest had much better try every means of diminishing expense, rather than raise charges or diminish the public accommodation; and with with this view he points attention for one thing to the disproportion between the power of engines and the resistance of permanent way, and the consequent enormity of tear and wear, and of expense of the maintenance of way, and suggests a proper adaptation of the power to the resistance. "Small trains and frequent, with small station-room, few police and porters (!), and fewer clerks, a slight increase of drivers and stokers, and a huge decrease of platelayers and a reduction in iron invoices, would do more for your dividends and the public accommodation," he says, "than the present system of elephantine traction, with a yielding foothold — a power developed and wasted; for it must be obvious that if, after expending millions to secure good gradients, a deflecting rail be laid down, it is equivalent to converting them into bad gradients. In water transit, a steam-boat drives a greater or lesser wave of water before her bows,—in rail transit, a locomotive drives a wave of rail before her driving-wheels equivalent to ascending a constant incline, and demanding a far greater expenditure of steam-power to surmount it. The difference in the two cases is, that it is impossible wholly to surmount, though we may modify, the difficulty with the steam-boat; whereas, in the case of the rail, it is practicable to surmount the difficulty altogether, by proportioning the load on the wheel to the strength of the rail." A liberty he thinks granted to companies to build houses contiguous to their lines would ultimately render the railway itself to some extent a secondary consideration, and infallibly result in cheap fares and numerous trains; while, on the contrary, men of business and many others may, by want of conveyance and high fares, be scared from country houses and railway transit altogether. By a withdrawal of the prohibition to build, he argues, railway companies would soon lay out farms and build factories, and let out power and supply water, and gas, and manure, and open mines and quarries, and teach landed proprietors to go and do likewise. They contain, dormant, the elements of prosperity far greater than their most sanguine projectors ever dreamed of in their calculation of tolls and fares. We give charters to water companies, gas companies, manure companies, canal, railway, banking, building companies, separately, and yet prevent a company from uniting together to work out conjointly all these things urgently for better advantage. Give them but free scope, and, in addition to all these, they will become provision purveyors to the community far more economical than we have yet beheld. The mile linear would come to represent the mile square—the toll trustee would become the landed proprietor—the long-stage proprietor would become the inn-keeper, and the short-stager would grow into a householder. Gas would be made in the original coal-pits, and every spring of pure water would be converted to man's uses. Under such a system all the stations would become market towns and bazaars. The shareholders would be safer for ever, for it would be impossible to have great fluctuations in the value of property so secured." Great and weighty license this author would indeed give to the railway interest! There is certainly, however, something like force of thought and forethought, with originality of idea in all this.

RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

The amount of English calls this month is 943,632*l.*; of Scotch, 186,250*l.*; Irish, 112,625*l.*; foreign, 412,500*l.*; total, 1,655,007*l.* This sum is about one-half the amount of that called up in the preceding month. Will they come when you do call them? adds a facetious contemporary.——A new method of attaching tires to railway wheels has been patented by Messrs. Charles Green and James Newman, of Birmingham, manufacturers. The patentees employ a tire-bar, bent into a step-like form, and having a small portion of the lower vertical point bent again at right angles, so as to serve for a catch, or rest, to the felloe of the wheel.——There is to be a new station at Colchester. The Eastern Counties demanded a rental of 2,000*l.* for the use of their station from the Eastern Union, a charge which was deemed too preposterous to be accepted.——The Wenden station, near Saffron Walden, on the Eastern Counties line, is to be henceforth called the Audley-end station.——Mr. W. J. Cannon, of Cambridge, has patented a new species of cattle truck, with an open floor above the close one, made of galvanized cast-iron, or other metal or wood, ridged or reeded with transverse bars, to secure a sure footing. The ordinary floor beneath then forms a tank for the manure, which is sluiced off into a proper receptacle at the end of each journey.——We should have noted last week the fall of a bridge which crosses the Stour, near Canterbury, when a luggage and fish train, with its engine, tumbled into the vale and stream below. "The cause of the fall of the bridge is supposed to be the recent excessive floods."——The Directors of the London and North-Western Railway have published a detailed account of their engagements and liabilities, from which it appears that the total length of line in which the company are interested, directly and indirectly, is 1,141 miles; that the total amount already expended is 22,835,120*l.*, and that 3,136,626*l.* is the expenditure yet to take place. In addition to this, the company have obtained powers for the construction of fourteen lines, at an estimated aggregate cost of 3,876,963*l.*, which have not been commenced, and which will only be carried out upon the express sanction of the shareholders.——A statement made by some of our contemporaries, to the effect that the works at the Britannia tube across the Menai straits had been suspended from deficiency of funds, has been contradicted 'on authority.'——The works on the Wilts, Somerset, and Weymouth line are said to be suspended in the vicinity of Maiden Newton.——The directors of the South Devon line have passed a resolution, reducing the salaries of all men employed on the line. The policemen and porters are to have 14*s.* a-week instead of 15*s.*, and those of a higher grade will be reduced about 20 per cent. A great number of hands have recently been discharged all along the line, and a further reduction in the number of porters, policemen, and clerks is contemplated. The reduction made in the salaries of the officials is in accordance with a suggestion made at the last half-yearly meeting.—The secretary of this line has issued notices for the sale of 680 tons of atmospheric pipes, averaging about 8 cwt. each, now lying at Bristol; also for the sale of about 1,500 tons Scotch pig-iron, and about 1,000 tons Welsh cold blast iron, deliverable at Bristol and Bridgewater.——The construction of the viaduct across the river Mite at Ravenglass, on the Whitehaven and Furness junction, has been let, by contract, to Mr. William Brown, of Workington.——A meeting of contractors on the Aberdeen line was held lately, at Stonehaven, in consequence of certain orders by the Directors to suspend their works, and certain misunderstandings in regard to the company's engineers and the referee for the contractors. The meeting was attended by almost all the contractors; Mr. Forbes in the chair, and resolved unanimously to disregard the company's order, and to apply to the court for authority to finish their respective contracts, under the inspection of the original referee, Mr. Gibb.——The temporary wooden bridge across the Tweed, which forms the last link of continuous line from the southern to the northern metropolis, was inspected and opened on Tuesday week. It was commenced in the early part of this year, and the quantity of timber employed in its construction amounts to nearly 300,000 cubic feet. It is 39 feet wide at the base, contracting gradually as it ascends to 13 feet in breadth. The bridge itself is 1,200 feet long, and the height from the bed of the river 120 feet. The embankment extending from the bridge to the station at Tweedmouth, nearly half a mile long, is estimated to contain 1,000,000 tons of earth. The permanent stone bridge, on one side of this one, will be finished in July next, and will contain 28 semicircular arches, 11 to span the river. The whole length will be 3,000 feet, and the extreme height, from the foundation to the roadway, 134 feet.——It is said that one of the arches of the South-Western Viaduct at Lambeth has been fitted as an infant school, that another is about to be used as an Independent chapel, and that some charitable philanthropists are about to hire one or two as shelters for the houseless during the approaching winter.——The *Bee*, from Dieppe, has brought into the Thames a cargo of railway waggons, being returned railway materials from France, after having been used on one of the French lines.—According to a report to the French government, the number of locomotive-engines constructed in France, and employed by the country in 1842, equalled the number imported from abroad; in 1843, there were two more French than foreign engines; in 1844, the surplus was 44; in 1845, 76; and in 1846, this excess was 161. In 1846, there were 461 locomotives, of 60 horse-power each, upon the average amounting to 27,600 horse-power. Comparing the strength of man to horse-power, the steam-engines of all kinds employed in France in 1846, were substitutes for 2,097,625 men.——The first railway line in Spain, that from Barcelona to Mataro, a length of 5 leagues, was privately opened on 8th ult., and was to be opened to the public on the 15th.

Estimates for Sewers in City of London.—At a meeting of the City Sewers Commission, on Tuesday, tenders were opened for the construction of sewers in the vicinity of Westmoreland-buildings, Aldersgate-street, Bartholomew-close, and several other densely-populated places. There were six competitors. The highest amount was 2,500*l.*, and the lowest 1,695*l.* The surveyor's estimate was 1,900*l.* It was ordered that the works be entrusted to Mr. Browne, whose tender was 1,695*l.*

Competition.—Designs and specifications for the erection of a new workhouse at Birmingham, are wanted by 13th December: particulars as advertised.

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